

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 3422

STADIS//////////

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, IS, SA
SUBJECT: ISRAELI BACKGROUND PAPER ON SAUDI ARABIA

REF: JIDDA 3096

IN EVENT DEPARTMENT IS ASKED FOR COMMENT ELITZUR'S
ARTICLE (REFTEL), WE HAVE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS WHICH MAY
BE USEFUL:

(A) ELITZUR'S BASID ARGUMENT IS THAT THE SAUDIS NEED US
MORE THAN WE NEED THEM; THAT THEY ARE "TOTALLY DEPENDENT"
ON WASHINGTON. WE SUGGEST THIS MAKES NO MORE SENSE THAN
THE ARAB ARGUMENTS THAT ISRAEL IS "TOTALLY DEPENDENT" ON
WASHINGTON BECAUSE OF THE LEVEL OF OUR ECONOMIC, POLITICAL,
AND MILITARY AID, BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE. THE SAUDIS
DEFINITELY ARE NOT TOTALLY DEPENDENT ON THE U.S. AND THAT
IS OUR PROBLEM. ON ARMS, PARTICULARLY, THEY HAVE A
REAL AND MEANINGFUL EUROPEAN OPTION.

(B) ON U.S. OIL DEPENDENCE, ELITZUR'S ARGUMENT SEEMS
ONLY TO SHIFT BACK THE POTENTIAL OIL SQUEEZE AND NEED
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FOR INCREASED SAUDI SUPPLIES INTO THE LATE RATHER THAN
MIDDLE 1980'S. HE IS REIGHT, OF COURSE, IN SAYING WE
ARE NOT "ABSOLUTELY" DEPENDENT ON SAUDI OIL; NO
DEPENDENCE IS ABSOLUTE. BUT HE CANNOT DEFINE AWAY
AS A MYTH A SERIOUSLY GROWING DEPENDENCE, BOTH OF
THE U.S. AND OUR ECONOMIC PARTNERS.

(C) WE AGREE WITH ELITZUR THAT THE SAUDIS HAVE LIMITED OPTIONS FOR USING THEIR INVESTMENTS FOR POLITICAL LEVERAGE PURPOSES IN NORMAL CONDITIONS. BUT WOULD THE SAME CONSTRAINTS APPLY IN ABNORMAL CONDITIONS, I.E., WAR? CAN THE SAUDIS GO LONGER WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF THEIR INVESTMENTS, OR WE WITHOUT BENEFIT OF THEIR OIL?

(D) WE FIND ELITZUR'S ASSERTIONS ABOUT THE LACK OF INTERNAL SAUDI SECURITY UNFOUNDED. THIS GOVERNMENT DOES NOT RELY ON U.S. BAYONETS" TO KEEP ITS HOUSE IN ORDER. MOREOVER, IF THERE WERE POTENTIAL REVOLUTIONARIES WAITING IN THE WINGS (AS ELITZUR SUGGESTS), WOULD THEY NOT BE LIKELY, IF IN POWER TO CHANGE AWAY FROM THAT RELIANCE ON THE U.S. WHICH GIVES HIM THE GROUNDS TO ASSERT THAT THE SAUDIS NEED US MORE THAN WE THEM?

(E) WE ARE CONCERNED OVER THE IMPLICATIONS OF ELITZUR'S ASSERTIONS AND INNUENDOS THAT ANYONE WORKING OR LOBBYING FOR SAUDI ARABIA OR SAUDI INTERESTS IS SOMEHOW DISHONEST OR DISLOYAL.
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